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Turiddu, Santuzza, and Lola at the Church door

THE GREAT OPERAS
BY
J. CUTHBERT HADDEN

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA
MASCAGNI
PAGLIACCI
LEONCAVALLO



LONDON. T.C. & E.C. JACK
NEW YORK
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GARY
JONES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SANTUZZA, a Young Peasant Girl (Soprano)

TURIDDU, a Young Peasant (Tenor)

LUCIA, his Mother (Contralto)

ALFIO, a Carrier (Baritone)

LOLA, his Wife (Mezzo-Soprano)

Peasants and Children

For the sections of this volume dealing with the story and the music of both operas, the editor is indebted to Miss J. C. Drysdale. The music quotations are given by kind permission of Messrs. Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew, Ltd.

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

TURIDDU, a handsome young peasant, is in love with Lola, a fair village maiden, who returns his affection. He enlists as a soldier, and on his return from the war discovers that his betrothed has proved faithless and married Alfio, a carrier. To drown his grief, he seeks another love, and his choice falls on Santuzza, who becomes passionately attached to him. But the fickle Lola very soon tires of Alfio; and, chagrined at the happiness of her former lover with his new sweetheart, she is mad with jealousy, and endeavours to win him back to her side. This she has already succeeded in doing when the play begins.

The orchestral introduction is interrupted by a Siciliana, sung by Turiddu behind the

scenes, in which he extols Lola's beauty and protests his undying devotion. The curtain rises on the Square of a Sicilian village. At the back, on the right, there is a church; on the left, an inn and the cottage of old Lucia, the mother of Turiddu. It is Easter Day. The church bells are ringing, and a crowd of peasants, men, women, and children, come on leisurely, cross the stage, and pass into the church. A chorus in praise of Spring and the reawakening of nature is heard from behind. Then the women appear, still singing; they are joined by the men, and all slowly wend their way home, the strains dying in the distance.

When the stage is once more cleared, Santuzza enters. Going towards the cottage she asks Lucia, who comes out at the same moment, what has become of Turiddu. His mother replies that he has gone for wine to Francofonte. Santuzza, however, declares he was seen in the village last night, and hints that she suspects his whereabouts. Lucia

invites Santuzza to go into the church, but she refuses. "I dare not enter," she says—"I who am accursed. My heart is broken."

Now the cracking of a whip and the sound of bells are heard from without; and Alfio, accompanied by a number of peasants, appears, singing a merry song of the road, to which the men, soon joined by the women, supply a chorus. He is perfectly happy, entirely free from care; driving his team, and believing in his wife, tender and true, who keeps watch at home. When the crowd disperses in various directions, and he is left alone with Lucia and Santuzza, Lucia tells him he is right to be always so gay. In answer to his request for some old wine of hers, which he likes, she says it is finished, but that Turiddu has gone for more. Alfio knows better. "'Twas only this morn I saw him beside my cottage lurking." When Lucia expresses surprise, Santuzza quickly tells her to be silent. Just then the organ sounds from the church, and Alfio, bidding them go

to mass without him, leaves them abruptly. The Easter music is now heard within; soon men and women enter, kneel in front of the church, and also join in singing. Finally Santuzza and Lucia add their voices to the hymn of thanksgiving, at the close of which, all, save these two, proceed into the sacred edifice.

Lucia, who remembers Santuzza's warning to be silent, would fain know its meaning, and thus calls forth the beautiful Romance, in which is revealed the whole story of love and jealousy, the certainty that Lola has regained her power over Turiddu, and the despair of Santuzza. Lucia passes into the church promising to pray for the broken-hearted girl, just as Turiddu appears on the scene. When he demands of his old love why she has not gone to mass, she replies that she cannot, and entreats him to listen to her. To her question, "Where hast thou come from?" he insists "from Francofonte"; and on her asserting that he has been seen

stealing from Lola's cottage that morning and that Alfio knows of it, he charges her with spying on him and wishing to kill him. He persists in denying his love for Lola, and has nothing but scorn for the poor girl whose passionate pleading has no effect upon his heart. He ends by telling her plainly that he loves her no more. At that moment Lola is heard singing behind the scenes:

Oh, gentle flower of love!

Close to my beating heart I hold thee, dreaming,
Heaven has no flower above so sweetly gleaming!

Oh, gentle flower of love!

Heaven has a thousand stars of gold above me,
I ask but one in all the world to love me!

Oh, gentle flower of love!

She enters, and seeing the pair, breaks off, asking Turiddu, "Where is Alfio?" Then, pointing to the church, she inquires of her rival, "Why go you not yonder?" Santuzza makes answer, "They only pray whose hearts are free from sin and stainless;" to which Lola retorts, "Then, thanks be to Heaven, Heaven will watch over me;" and ironically

blessing Turiddu and Santuzza, she, too, joins the worshippers. Turiddu, enraged, rushes on Santuzza, and then casts her from him. She pleads once more to be taken back to his heart, but in vain. At last he dashes her to the ground, and follows Lola into the church. Now Santuzza's love seems to be turned to hate. She curses the traitor, and when Alfio appears, she seizes the chance of revenge, telling him that his wife is false. When, however, she realises that Alfio means to fight and kill Turiddu, she bitterly regrets having betrayed him; for, in spite of his faithlessness, she still loves him. "Ah, wretched I!" she cries, while Alfio demands "Revenge, revenge!" And thus ends the first part of the work. After its storm and stress, depicting the conflict of human passions, the world-famed "Intermezzo" comes like a breath of fresh air to cool the atmosphere.

The second part of the stirring drama begins with a short orchestral prelude, during



Santuzza tells Alfio of his wife's falseness

which Lucia enters and crosses the stage to her cottage. A number of peasants follow, singing on their homeward way after the Easter celebrations. At the close of their "merry lay," they are joined by Lola and Turiddu from the church. Lola is also going home, but Turiddu begs her to stay. At the same time, turning to the crowd, he invites them to drink with him to-day. They accept and come to the table for the wine, while Turiddu sings a rousing drinking song, in which presently the whole company lustily join. They have just uttered the last words, "Drink on, drink on," when Alfio enters and salutes them. Turiddu at once fills a cup and hands it to him. "Thank you," says Alfio, "the wine you give, I cannot drink it. There is poison within it;" to which Turiddu replies, "'Tis as you please," throwing away the wine. Lola is terror-struck, and now feeling that there is trouble brewing she exclaims in anguish, "Ah, God! what woe is nigh!" At this point some of the women

in the crowd consult together, then go to Lola, and saying, "Come, Mistress Lola, this is no place for you," they lead her away.

When she is gone, Turiddu declares himself, "At your service, Alfio." The two men embrace, and Turiddu bites Alfio's right ear, as a challenge. "Master Turiddu," replies Alfio, "I will accept your challenge; we understand each other!" After a long pause, during which Turiddu is seized with terrible remorse, he addresses Alfio in accents of sorrow and repentance. "I know that I have wronged thee; blame not thy Lola. By heaven above thee, I swear the fault was mine alone! But if you kill me, who will care for Santa; lonely and deserted, who will protect her?" In a moment, changing his tone again, he shouts with violence, "Come then, let's try whose knife is longest," and Alfio goes off to await him in the garden.

Turiddu, now calling his mother from her cottage, begs her to bless him, and prays that,

if he return not, she will be a mother to his Santa. Lucia, in distress, wishes him to explain, but, with assumed indifference, he says he has only been dreaming; she need have no fear. He kisses her farewell, and beseeching her to pray for him, rushes out. By this time his mother realises that he is in great trouble, and running to the back of the stage she calls after him despairingly. Presently Santuzza appears, and crying, "Dearest mother," embraces the distracted woman, while the stage fills with people with fear and agitation on their faces. Confused voices are heard without, and then a woman's voice in the distance shouting, "Turiddu is killed!" The awful truth is repeated, and Santuzza and Lucia fall senseless to the ground.

THE MUSIC

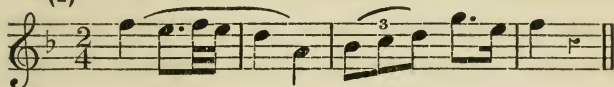
"CAVALLERIA" has had much adverse criticism as well as generous appreciation; as to its success there can be only one opinion. Since its first performance in 1890 it has been given all over the world, and has never failed anywhere. Still a favourite with the music-loving public, it is likely for many a day to come to retain its position in the operatic repertoire.

There are several qualities necessary for the writing of grand opera, but the two most essential are the gift of melody and the dramatic sense. Both of these Mascagni has in abundance. In "Cavalleria" the melody is not always original, it is occasionally reminiscent of other composers; but there is quite enough true inspiration to show that

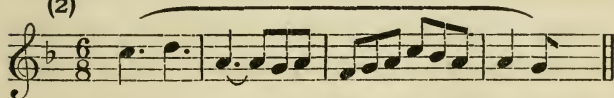
the composer need borrow from no one, while his dramatic force and power of declamation are prominent features of the work.

The orchestral prelude at once sounds the note of tragedy, preparing the listener for the stormy drama to follow. It begins with a solemn melody, used later as accompaniment when Santuzza begs Lucia to pray for her. Then two striking themes from the duet between Santuzza and Turiddu are introduced, which may be called the motives of entreaty:

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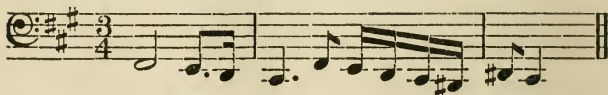
(2)



At that part of the first theme where, in the duet, Santuzza beseeches him most passionately to take her back to his heart, the orchestra is suddenly silent and the charming and characteristic Siciliana is sung behind the

curtain to a harp accompaniment. This is Turiddu's answer to Santuzza's pleading. It dies away *pianissimo*, and once more the orchestra blazes forth in continuation of the phrase interrupted by the love song. After a connecting figure, the second theme from the duet is given out; and finally the repetition of the first brings the introduction to a close.

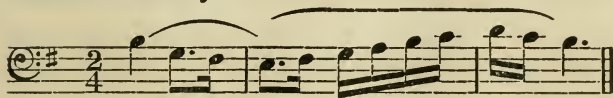
The opening chorus, with its piquant waltz rhythm and fresh, spring-like melody, is brimful of life and sunlight, suggesting the resurrection of nature and the consequent joy and gratitude of man. In marked contrast to this number is the *largo* passage for the orchestra, which foreshadows Santuzza's entrance. Its first phrase must be specially noted—the motive of her despair—for we shall hear it again and again:



Now Santuzza appears, and Mascagni's gift of declamation is at once apparent in her

opening phrases, in which she is musically characterised. At the end of the scena the despair motive is again introduced in the orchestra, when she declares herself accursed. Alfio's song which follows is bright and lively, in keeping with the joyous, happy-go-lucky nature of the carrier.

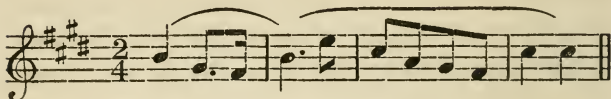
The prayer, though not markedly original and not particularly "churchy" in feeling, is a telling piece of writing, and its stage effect is impressive, though somewhat artificial. At its conclusion the tragic element once more reasserts itself in the very fine Romance in which Santuzza tells Lucia the sad story of unfaithful love. It is direct and simple in style and full of character. The insistent theme in the bass is typical of her jealousy and of Lola's treachery:



It is heard several times in the orchestra during the recital, and again later in the

B

work. The phrase in E major is descriptive of Santuzza's absorbing love for Turiddu :



At the end of the narrative the music assumes a gentle, tender character, when the distracted girl begs Lucia to pray for her; while at the same time the opening theme of the prelude is heard in the orchestra.

The duet for Santuzza and Turiddu contains, besides the two motives given out in the prelude, another arresting melody sung first by Turiddu and then taken up by Santa. Towards the close of the duet Santa's love-theme is heard *pianissimo* in the orchestra accompanying her entreaties. The light dainty Stornello (a sort of improvised Italian folk-song), in waltz rhythm, sung by Lola behind the scenes, enhances the grim despair of this number, throughout which the composer shows a wonderful power of musical characterisa-

tion. Lola, the heartless flirt; Santa, the deserted; and Turiddu, the fickle—all are described in the music allotted to them. From the dramatic point of view it is a strong scene of passionate realism, and the music has certainly played its part in heightening the emotional effect.

As Turiddu rushes into the church and Santa curses him, the despair motive is heard in the orchestra *fortissimo*; then gradually the tension relaxes, the music softens to *pianissimo*, and a few bars reminiscent of Alfio's song of the road herald the entrance of the carrier. When Santa tells Alfio that his wife is false, the theme in the bass typical of her jealousy and of Lola's treachery rises from the orchestra again and again. A short, marked phrase associated with Alfio's revenge, and a plaintive wailing theme suggestive of his despair are also heard repeatedly. At the close of the number a striking effect is produced by a whirling chromatic passage in unison,

apparently indicating the impending catastrophe.

The conception of the *Intermezzo* was a happy thought. Mascagni wished to show that, while the quartet of Sicilian peasants were living at white heat, so to speak, the great world outside was rolling on just as usual, quietly and serenely, all unconscious of this struggle to the death of human passions. He intended to create the feeling of largeness and peaceful repose, which should come as a relief after a scene of concentrated love, hatred, and revenge. And he has succeeded.

The opening, a phrase from the prayer, is adequately conceived, but unfortunately in the second part the means Mascagni has thought fit to use scarcely recommend themselves to a musician. The melody is cheap, and so is the combination of instruments. Probably no one could have made much more out of a passage for the violins in unison, with a harp and organ accompaniment. This movement is not on the same level as the

rest of the opera, and it is indeed curious that the weakest part should have become the most popular number. In spite, however, of its barrel-organ fame, and in spite of what musicians may think of its banal character, the *Intermezzo* still has the effect desired by the composer. Thus has he fulfilled his intention.

In the beginning of the second part the music which accompanied the peasants on their way to church is once more heard, and as they turn their steps homeward they are again singing of Easter. The "Brindisi," or drinking song, with its stirring chorus, has the requisite verve, and though somewhat reminiscent of other songs of the same class, serves its purpose well. Then with the entrance of Alfio and on to the end the audience is once more at high tension.

Turiddu's farewell to his mother is full of tenderness. Particularly beautiful is the broad phrase in which he commends Santa to her care, and entreats her to pray for him.

When he has gone, an agitated figure in the bass, beginning *piano* and increasing to *fortissimo*, seems to indicate the terror-stricken condition of his wretched mother. With the entrance of Santuzza, her love motive is thundered forth from the orchestra, merging into a phrase from the prayer, and culminating in a crash *ffff*. A roll of the drums is then heard *ppp*, with a weird chord for the brass—"Turiddu is killed!" When both women faint away, the theme of despair rises solemnly for the last time, and as the curtain falls tranquilly the tragedy ends with a rushing chromatic passage in unison.

In his treatment of the orchestra Mascagni does not show any special originality, but he has a fine idea of light and shade, though his contrasts are now and again too violent. Sometimes he is noisy—more so than the occasion would seem to demand—at other times lacking in fulness; but on the whole his scoring is musicianly, highly coloured, and dramatically effective.

THE COMPOSER

OF all the operatic composers who have risen to fame within recent years and whose works have been found worthy of performance by grand opera companies, Pietro Mascagni, if not the most gifted, is certainly the most noted. He is a native of Italy, having been born at Livorno in December 1863. His father was a baker with but slight pecuniary means, yet he sent his musically inclined son to the Milan Conservatoire, where he studied hard for the three years 1881-1884. Besides his acquirements there in theory and composition, he gained a practical knowledge of all the orchestral instruments, which has served him well as a conductor of opera.

When he left the Conservatoire, Mascagni found a post as assistant musical director

of an operetta company. At Parma he conducted in public for the first time, the work being Lecocq's "Heart and Hand." The company visited many of the large and small towns of Italy, and finally, after many vicissitudes, went to pieces in an out-of-the-way place. It was disbanded, and Mascagni, for the want of even a copper, was stranded. Here I cannot resist quoting himself, premising that he was already at work on an opera by which he hoped to conquer the musical public:

But as there is a providence for drunkards, so there is one for players. I had made friends with good people who showed me much affection, and one friend among them whom I made acquainted with the finished numbers of my opera showed so much enthusiasm on hearing them that he volunteered to assist me with money to enable me to work. I had already finished the overture when at Ancona, and now at Ascoli, having nothing better to do, I worked hard at my opera, wrote the *Intermezzo* and then the whole of the fourth act and instrumented it. My appetite was still very good, and I endeavoured to subdue the feeling by deep contemplation and medita-

tion, calling up mysterious pictures, which seemed to arise from my opera score as do the two ghosts which are constantly before the hero of the drama. My music, however, failed to provide me the necessities of life and I determined to return to Ancona, having meanwhile written letter upon letter asking for employment. One morning a letter arrived with an invitation to come at once to Naples, and an enclosure of 100 lire. I was engaged for the company of the Duke Cirella. It only lasted a month, when as before the company disbanded and left me idle for six weeks. I lost no time; all my meals consisted of a plate of macaroni, and I worked diligently at the composition and instrumentation of my opera, which grew to a large heap of music sheets; this I enclosed carefully in a handbag. It would be the treasury box of my future; this at least was my dream when taking long walks to Posilipo and Portici, chasing rainbows and seeing pictures of future greatness and fortune in the sparkling of the waves.

Mascagni then relates his renewed wanderings with Maresca's company, arriving on December 29, 1885, at Cerignola, to find there a home for several years. When the company started out for Sicily, our composer managed to get lost; and as soon as he found the

coast clear he returned to Cerignola, where some kindly souls among the city authorities got him one or two pupils, and then he became director of an orchestra school. "I found time to work on my opera," he says, recalling those days, "and had it finished in less than two years and a half. Only a few scenes were lacking in 1888, but I then locked up the score. I had some premonition that it might be a necessity for me to become better known by a work of smaller dimensions. The idea to write '*Cavalleria Rusticana*' had possession of me for several years previously."

The young composer gives a description of his despair and of his efforts to find a "text," when finally his friend Targioni, in Leghorn, promised him one. When the mail brought him the first chorus of the libretto he was in great joy, and said to his wife: "We must indulge in some expense to-day." "And what shall it be?" she asked. "An alarm clock." "And what for?" "So I may

get up to-morrow before sunrise to begin with the 'Cavalleria.'" This extra expense, he goes on to say frankly, "meant great alterations in our monthly budget, but it was granted me without difficulty. We went together to the clockmaker, and after much bargaining we bought a clock for 9 lire. I wound it up before retiring; but it was not destined to be of any use, as during the night—it was on February 3, 1889—at punctually 3 o'clock, my sweet little angel Mimi was born, the first of the series. I did not fail to fulfil the promise I had made to myself, and began to write the first chorus of the 'Cavalleria' at dawn." Mascagni then describes his past with its fears and hopes, its despair and its reliance, ending with the first representation of "Cavalleria" at the Constanza Theatre, Rome, in May 1890.

Fifteen years ago all the world knew the history of "Cavalleria Rusticana": how it was submitted to a musical friend, who promptly pronounced it "rubbish"; how Mas-

cagni despondently entered it in the competition for the prize of 2000 francs offered by Sonzogno, the famous music-publisher of Milan, for the best one-act opera; how Mascagni accepted the prize as a windfall beyond the wildest hopes of a man who, with wife and two children, was existing on half-a-crown a day.

The subsequent *furore* in Rome was a revelation. In answer to a telegram, Mascagni hurried to the capital in his usual *négligé*—in fact his only dress—the clumsy handiwork of a village tailor. Apparently a simple, countrified young fellow, he appeared on the stage before that immense and enthusiastic audience, which cheered him all the more that he was awkward, bewildered, even stupefied at the reception. The transition was too great, and he felt his brain reel. Sympathising, admiring faces crowded about him. But something of his everyday life, something more restful, he must have, and that speedily. Rushing to his rooms

after the performance, he telegraphed for his wife, and also despatched an incoherent letter, imploring her to pick up the children, and come to him without delay. She came—a plain, quiet person, who, during those tedious years of seclusion and hardship, had deteriorated in appearance, and had lost the worldly veneering of her younger days, but nevertheless a true helpmate for an agitated, fame-stricken man. That night she sat in a private box, listening to the entrancing strains, to the enthusiastic plaudits of the audience, weeping tears of joy throughout the performance. Her husband's time had come at last.

There is very little to say about Mascagni's later history. Speaking some sixteen years ago of his career, the composer remarked that there lay much hard work and many troubles behind him. "Success," he continued, "came upon me like a wild storm that took my breath away. I was afraid it would pass unless I went on working hard." He went

on working hard. But his other operas have not won any lasting success. "L'Amico Fritz" is too gentle a subject for his robust style; "Ratcliff," "I Rantzau," "Iris," and "Silvano" are hardly known outside Italy. In short Mascagni is as much the one-opera composer of "Cavalleria" as Bizet is the one-opera composer of "Carmen." That is his one grand success. Its "brutal magnetic measures" fascinated the public from the first; and then, as a critic with a leaning towards slang once put it, "the story is a stunner, necessitating several strong characters." Here is a work dealing with the strongest and fiercest passions—a terrible tragedy, rushing swiftly and inevitably to its close.

If Mascagni's magnitude is doubtful, his brilliance is plain to all the world. His music abounds in melodic charm, and his sense of orchestral colour and effect is exceptionally strong. In temperament, disposition, and character he is "earnest, active, benevolent, sincere, and reliable." Pronounced success in

life, artistically and materially, does not appear to have changed his nature appreciably, for he manifests the same frank, ingenuous traits of character now that he did in his boyhood. He composes, we are told, with remarkable facility, and the spontaneity of his inspiration is such that he is rarely at a loss for appropriate musical ideas. When he gets a new libretto, he is content at first to read it daily, studying the detail and "living over" the incidents. He does not necessarily begin at the beginning, but chooses a scene anywhere that attracts him, and reads it till the words turn into music. Then he "sits down to the piano and the notes come pell-mell."

Like most Italians, Mascagni is very superstitious. He carries about with him a host of amulets and a collection of roasted chestnuts warranted to turn off the evil eye! He has a passion for watches, too, of which he has formed a large collection. It is also said that he poses as a dude.

Some of his photographs show the hair softly undulating, while others portray the heat of the combat by the hair bristling up in a state of disorder. But who cares for such trivial details?

I PAGLIACCI

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

NEDDA (in the play *Columbine*), a Strolling Player, Wife of Canio (Soprano).

CANIO (in the play *Punchinello*), Master of the Troupe (Tenor).

TONIO, the Clown (in the play *Taddeo*), (Baritone).

BEPPE (in the play *Harlequin*), (Tenor).

SILVIO, a Villager (Baritone).

Villagers and Peasants.

The scene is laid in Calabria, near Montalto, on the Feast of the Assumption.

Period, between 1865 and 1870.

PROLOGUE

THE Prologue is sung by Tonio in front of the curtain. The author, Tonio tells, loves the custom of a prologue, and has sent him to explain that the subject of his work is a chapter out of the book of life—a true story. The actor, though clad in motley and tinsel, is a man with a heart like his auditor; a man with the same passions, the same capacity for gladness and sorrow, the same broad heaven above him and the same wide lonely world before him. Then he gives the sign to raise the curtain.

FIRST ACT

The characters in the story are a troupe of strolling players, called Pagliacci, such as are often seen in Italian villages. They tour the country, going from fair to fair, playing in any available theatre the story of Colum-

bine, Harlequin, and Punchinello, to an audience of admiring peasants. The act begins with the arrival of one of these troupes in a village in Calabria at the time of the Feast of the Virgin di Mezzagosto. The scene is the entrance of the village, where two roads meet. On the right is a rustic theatre. As the curtain rises, sounds of a drum and of a trumpet out of tune are heard. Laughing, shouting, whistling voices are approaching. Villagers enter in holiday attire. Tonio looks up the road on the left, then, worried by the staring crowd, lies down in front of the theatre. It is a bright sunny day, and the time is three o'clock.

While the peasants sing a chorus of welcome to the players the troupe come on. Canio, the chief actor, invites the crowd to attend the performance at seven the same evening. Tonio advances to help Nedda down from the cart, but Canio, who has already alighted, boxes his ears, and, taking Nedda in his arms, lifts her out himself.

Beppe drags away the donkey cart, and Tonio, chaffed by the boys, disappears grumbling behind the theatre. Some of the villagers then ask Canio to drink with them at the tavern. Beppe reappears and agrees to join the party, but when Canio invites Tonio he replies that he has "to clean the donkey": he will follow later. A peasant in jest bids Canio beware lest Tonio make love to his wife during his absence. Thereupon Canio declares solemnly that such a game is hardly worth the playing, for the stage and life are not the same. If in a play he caught Nedda with a lover, he would get into a passion, and then probably allow the lover to beat him while the people applauded. But if his wife should deceive him in earnest the ending would be different. When the crowd exclaim, "But surely you don't suspect her!" he answers, "No, of course not: I love and respect her;" and going up to Nedda, he kisses her, and then disappears behind the theatre.

Now more villagers enter with pipers.

After the Bell Chorus, they all go off to vespers, leaving Nedda alone. At first she is afraid that Canio suspects her of having a lover; soon, however, she dismisses the idea, and revels in the glorious sunshine, the beauties of nature, and the song of the birds, which seem to respond to the pulsing of her restless heart. Finishing her song, she discovers that Tonio has been listening. He seizes the opportunity of declaring his passion, and when she laughs at him, and finally strikes him in the face with a whip as he is trying to kiss her, he vows he will have his revenge, and goes off. Presently Nedda's lover, Silvio, appears and entreats her to fly with him. She refuses, and bids him not to tempt her. He continues, nevertheless, to plead his cause, and so eloquently that at last she gives way, and promises to go to him that night for ever.

Tonio, who has been spying on her, and has gone away to inform her husband of her treachery, returns with Canio just as the



Nedda and her lover

lovers are saying farewell. Canio, furious with jealousy, rushes after Silvio, but is too late to catch him. Returning to Nedda he demands the traitor's name. She absolutely refuses to divulge it, though he draws a dagger from his belt and is about to kill her. At this point Beppe appears and snatches the knife from him. At Beppe's call, Tonio comes to help him to calm their master. Beppe then takes Nedda into the theatre, while Tonio comforts Canio with the assurance that the gallant will return—perhaps come to the play to-night. Beppe once more appears, and, bidding Canio get ready for the performance, goes away with Tonio. Alone, Canio cries out in despair. How can he act a comedy, with tragedy in his heart! Then with bitter cynicism he addresses himself:

Thou art not a man, thou'rt but a jester !
On with the motley, and the paint, and the powder !
The people pay thee, and want their laugh, you know !
If Harlequin thy Columbine has stolen, laugh Punchinello !
The world will cry, " Bravo ! "

At last, sobbing as if his heart would break,

he moves slowly towards the theatre, pushes the curtain roughly as if not wishing to enter, and burying his face in his hands, pauses for a moment to recover himself; then, with a sudden rush, disappears between the curtains.

SECOND ACT

It is the evening of the same day. Beppe comes from behind blowing a trumpet; Tonio, following with the big drum, takes up his position on the left of the theatre. People come from all directions to the play, and Beppe arranges the benches for the women, who quarrel about their seats. Meantime the peasants sing a chorus descriptive of their rush for places, and their impatience for the actors to begin. Nedda goes round with a plate to collect the money, and Silvio, who is among the audience, manages to remind her quietly of to-night's rendezvous. At last the curtain is drawn aside, and the play within a play begins.

The scene represents a little room, with two side doors, a window at the back, and a table and two chairs on the right. By a strange coincidence the play happens to be a burlesque of all that has taken place in the first act.

Columbine (Nedda) is seated near the table; rising she walks about restlessly, as if expecting some one. Punchinello (Canio), her husband, she tells, will not be home till morning, while Taddeo (Tonio), the servant, is at market. Hearing the sound of a guitar off the stage, she rushes to the window with a cry of joy. Harlequin, behind, serenades her. Then Taddeo peeps through the door and watches Columbine, meanwhile singing a trill and roulade in mock tragic style at which the peasants laugh. He thinks his opportunity has come to confess to his mistress that he adores her, so he makes her aware of his presence by a long and exaggerated sigh. In the middle of his declaration, Harlequin, at a signal from Columbine, jumps in through the

window, puts a bottle down, and taking Taddeo by the ear, just when he says, "Must I forsake thee?" answers, "Yes, or I'll make thee." "What," exclaims Taddeo, "you love her? Then I must hand her over!" He goes out blessing the pair and promising to watch over them. Columbine now sets the table for supper, Harlequin adding the bottle of wine he has brought with him, and they sit down to enjoy themselves. Presently Harlequin takes out a little phial he has had concealed about him, and giving it to Columbine, asks her to put its contents in her husband's wine, and fly with him. Taddeo at this point warns the pair that the husband is near, that he has discovered all, and is stamping with rage. He at once goes off by the door on the left; and as Harlequin is escaping by the window, he reminds Columbine of the philtre, while she bids him good-night in the exact same words she had used to Silvio, "To-night, love, and for ever, I shall be thine!"

Punchinello (Canio) enters in time to hear



Columbine and Harlequin at supper

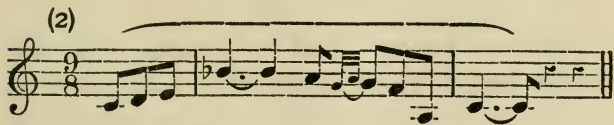
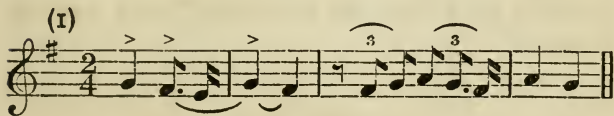
the last words, and exclaiming aside, "God, am I dreaming? What she said this morning!" he advances to play his part. He asks Columbine who has been with her. When she replies, "No one but Taddeo," and brings the old servant out of his hiding-place to testify to her fidelity, he still insists that she has a lover and must reveal his name. Nedda makes light of the matter, and calls out "Punchinello! Punchinello!" in a jocular manner. But he is not to be put off. He declares that he is no longer Punchinello; he is a man again, with a heart crying for vengeance. Recalling the love he once bore his wife and his trust in her honour, Canio falls on the chair by the table overwhelmed with emotion, saying, "What have I now but a heart that is broken?" The audience are delighted with his wonderful acting, and when he continues in the same passionate strain, finally telling his wife, "Thou hadst my love, but now thou hast my hate and scorn!" they shout "Bravo!" with enthusiasm.

By this time Nedda has begun to be afraid of her husband. She tries to resume the play with a forced smile. This only increases Canio's rage, and when he once more demands her lover's name and she again refuses, he becomes so excited that the peasants wonder if he is in earnest, and call out to that effect. Nedda continues to defy him, and though he threatens to kill her, she will not give up her secret. At last, frantic with jealous rage, he rushes at her and stabs her to the heart. With her dying breath she calls to Silvio for help. Now Canio knows his betrayer, and as Silvio runs towards the stage, he too receives his death-blow from the same hands. The spectators cry out in terror, "Stop him! arrest him!" Then Canio, in a state of collapse, lets his knife fall, and gasps out—"The comedy is ended!" And the comedy is indeed literally ended.

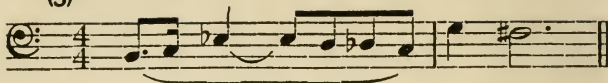
THE MUSIC

PROLOGUE

THE orchestral prelude opens with a short lively phrase denoting the Pagliacci, or troupe of players. Suddenly a slow, wailing theme (1) is heard, typical of Canio's despair. This is followed by a suave, caressing melody (2) representing the love of Silvio and Nedda, which in turn gives way to the grim, mysterious motive (3) associated with Canio's revenge :



(3)



Then the Pagliacci theme is resumed, and presently Tonio appears, to sing the beautiful prologue. When he refers to the life of the actor he is accompanied by the Pagliacci theme; when he tells of the drama to follow, the motives of love, and revenge, and despair rise from the orchestra; when he asks the audience to look on the players as men with hearts and passions like themselves, he sings a fine broad melody, with a flowing accompaniment to which the harp lends additional charm. Then this striking and original introduction is brought to a close as he cries, "Ring up the curtain."

FIRST ACT

The first chorus, with its trumpet calls, its strings *tremolo*, its shrieking wood-wind effects, its blaring brass, and its general bustle, is

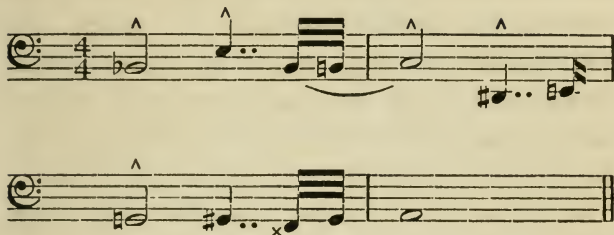
full of colour, and highly descriptive of the arrival and reception of the troupe. After this noisy scene the music changes to a tripping measure, as Canio invites the crowd to the evening performance. This is interrupted by the suggestion that Tonio stays behind to flirt with Nedda, when Canio sings in a strain of simple, doleful melody, which seems to indicate his presentiment of the impending catastrophe. When he speaks of finding Nedda with a lover on the stage, the accompanying figure is the same as that used in the play, in the last act; but when he mentions the possibility of Nedda deceiving him in real life, we hear in the orchestra the revenge theme which we have already noted in the prologue. The lively rhythm is then resumed, the bagpipes are heard in the distance, and soon the pipers enter. The Bell Chorus, with its drone-like accompaniment, in which the men imitate the bell and the sopranos the bagpipes, is particularly fine. It gives us at once the Italian village

atmosphere. After a striking and harmonically original cadence, the music gradually dies away as the peasants disappear, and the pipe-like strains grow fainter and fainter. The musical atmosphere changes when Nedda, left alone, wonders if Canio suspects her, the motives of revenge and love accompanying her recitative.

The well-known Ballatella is remarkable for its striking and piquant orchestration, in which the harp and muted strings are used with charming effect. With its freshness and brightness it suggests the open air, and though trying to the artist, it is a very grateful number.

The melody in which Tonio makes love is reminiscent of his utterances in the prologue, while Nedda's answer is accompanied by a delicate figure for the strings which is used again in the play in the last act. When she strikes him, a sinister theme in the bass, heard for the first time, and boldly announced

by the trombones with the strings *tremolo*, indicates Tonio's revenge:



Then Silvio's appearance is intimated by a snatch of the love-motive, which is a leading feature in the accompaniment of the scene that follows.

This long duet for the lovers is one of the finest numbers in the opera; noteworthy for its flow of passionate melody, to which the by-play of Tonio, with his vengeance-motive, offers an effective foil. The love-theme is worked up, rising higher and higher; and then a broad phrase for Nedda, repeated in imitation by Silvio, culminates in a fine burst of passion for both, followed by a soft, tender

cadence as Nedda gives way to his entreaty. When Tonio and Canio appear at the back, witnessing the farewell of the lovers, the motive of Tonio's revenge is given out *pianissimo* by the basses in unison, unaccompanied, in all its naked grimness. When Canio rushes after Silvio, the orchestra works up *agitato*, this theme being very prominent. The theme also plays an important part, along with Canio's revenge-motive, in the accompaniment of the rest of this scene, in which declamatory and tragic force are conspicuous features.

Canio's solo is one of the gems of the opera. His jealous rage, his rebellion against fate, his despair at having to act the clown when death is in his soul, are all graphically depicted in this fine melody, which, in its pathos, rises to such a dramatic height. As Canio moves slowly towards the theatre the despair-motive is heard in the orchestra, and now in the major key—a truly dramatic touch. Thus the first act is brought to an effective close, leav-

ing the listener with a sad feeling of utter hopelessness.

INTERMEZZO

The principal feature of this movement is the theme first sung by Tonio in the prologue. Although the "Pagliacci" *Intermezzo* has not achieved the same fame as that by the composer's fellow-countryman, it serves a somewhat similar purpose, in affording relief to this stirring drama of strong passions, while musically perhaps it is more deserving of appreciation.

SECOND ACT

The second act, like the first, begins with trumpet calls and general bustle, as the villagers assemble for the play. Much of the music of the opening chorus is repeated, and the same atmosphere prevails.

The play opens with a minuet of quite old-world flavour, during which the Columbine lets it be understood that in her husband's

absence she is awaiting her lover, the Harlequin. The serenade which he sings outside her window, with its *pizzicato* accompaniment, is quite in the old Italian troubadour style, and the gavotte heard later on might have been written by Mozart. Indeed we should specially mark here the wonderful contrast between this play within a play and the real tragedy underlying it, as illustrating what Canio sings in the first act: "The stage and life are different, you'll discover!"

Taddeo's mock-heroics and vocal roulades afford a little touch of humorous relief. The tripping figure for strings which accompanied Nedda's scorn of Tonio's love, when in the first act she bade him keep his declaration till the evening, is now elaborated with charming effect. After they have sung the gavotte and sat down to supper, Taddeo comes to warn them that the husband is at hand, and then the music changes. The love melody is heard in the orchestra as Canio, the Punchinello, appears in time to catch

Columbine's farewell to Harlequin in the same words she had already used to Silvio; while his outburst of despair is accompanied by the theme of revenge. Nedda, however, continues to play her part of Columbine in characteristic strains. Again we hear the revenge-motive as the actor merges in the man, and the action hurries to its inevitable end. For a moment he forgets his wrongs as he sings a passionate melody, recalling his trustful love for his wife. Immediately, however, the thirst for revenge is again uppermost, aggravated now by Nedda's efforts to sustain her part in the play to the old gavotte tune, while fear is in her heart.

Canio's rage at last overcomes him, and the storm in his breast is reflected in the music, which now becomes agitated in character. The general excitement is increased by the consternation of the audience, who begin to suspect that the players are not acting. Finally Canio, in desperation, tries to force

from his wife the name of her lover, and when she firmly refuses to reveal it, he stabs her to the heart. As Nedda falls she calls Silvio, who rushes forward to meet his fate at the hands of the distracted husband. For the last time the revenge-theme rises solemnly from the orchestra, and the work is brought to a close with the plaintive, wailing melody associated with Canio's despair, which now blazes forth *fff* as the curtain falls.

The orchestration of "Pagliacci" is brilliant, and, if at times a trifle noisy, is as a rule picturesque and effective. It seldom fails to meet the dramatic requirements, while generally speaking good judgment and a strong sense of colour are shown throughout.

Like Mascagni, Leoncavallo possesses the main gifts essential to the writing of a successful opera. He has the feeling for melody, dramatic force, declamatory power, and musical characterisation. Like him, too, he has his faults. His music often recalls other composers, and his contrasts are occasion-

ally exaggerated. On the other hand, his dramatic grip is greater, as well as his power of characterisation, while he has the obvious advantage of being his own librettist. He makes a more consistent use of the *leit-motive*, and allows nothing to interfere with the action of the drama, which never flags. The music of "Pagliacci" has by some been called theatrical, possibly because now and then it is apt to suffer from the composer's over-anxiety to accentuate the dramatic situation.

THE COMPOSER

RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO was born at Naples in March 1858, so that he was thirty-four when "Pagliacci" was produced in 1892. He is the son of Judge-President Leoncavallo and Virginia Dauria, daughter of a famous Neapolitan painter. He studied at the Naples Conservatoire, and at sixteen started on a tour as a pianist. At Bologna he heard "Tannhäuser," the first of Wagner's works he ever knew. "This new art," he says, "made a deep impression on me, and I began to study it ardently." By-and-by, he formed the resolution, imitating Wagner, to embody in a tetralogy the whole Italian Renaissance, while he wrote a musical drama on the traditional Italian opera lines, and produced on the stage an epic poem.

At Bologna Leoncavallo made the personal acquaintance of Wagner, who was there for the production of "Rienzi." "In the only conversation I had with him," says our composer, "I spoke to him of my project. He listened kindly, and smiled at my juvenile enthusiasm. He encouraged me to persevere in carrying out my idea, and bade me not be alarmed at the difficulties and struggles I would have to face." While talking, Wagner pulled off his famous cap, seized between his fingers a lock of his white hair, and said, "Voyez, je lutte encore." This conversation, Leoncavallo adds, "was very beneficial to me, because it taught me that a like work could not easily be achieved, and during all the bitterness of my subsequent struggles I had always before my eyes the figure of the patriarch, with his 'Voyez, je lutte encore.'"

Leoncavallo, an interviewer once told, has on his writing-table a framed portrait of Wagner, to which he would point saying,

"Voilà mon Wagner, qui me quitte jamais." He is also proud of a bust of Massenet, presented by the composer, and inscribed, "À mon confrère, à mon ami, Leoncavallo."

The historical researches for his contemplated tetralogy occupied Leoncavallo for six years. Then he travelled "all over the world," as he says, to earn his living as a concert pianist. He visited Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Germany, Belgium, and Holland, and finally settled for several years in Paris. It is often said that he began his musical career as a pianist in Egypt, and the statement is almost literally true. His uncle, Leoncavallo Bey, was at that time director of the Press Bureau at the Egyptian Foreign Office. Ruggiero played at Court, and was appointed "Musician in Ordinary" to the brother of the Viceroy, Tewfik Mahmud. His ability, and the influence behind him, caused Arabi Pasha to promise him the post of Chief of the Egyptian military bands, at a handsome salary. His future, therefore, seemed assured.

But, alas! the British redcoats interfered with Arabi's plans, and Leoncavallo himself tells the story of how he saved his life after the battle of Tel-el-Kebir by a twenty-four hours' ride on horseback to Ismailia, disguised as an Arab.

By 1888 Leoncavallo had completed the text of his opera, the "Medici"; for, as has already been noted, he follows the example of Wagner in writing his own libretto. "I find it quite impossible," he says, "to set to music somebody else's words. I do not understand how any really artistic work can be created in that way. With me words and notes are simultaneous; at least, while I am writing the text, the scaffolding, the framework of the music is going up. The phrasing, the elaboration come afterward." Well, having finished the "Medici," Leoncavallo went off to Milan to communicate the fact to the publisher Ricordi. The idea pleased Ricordi, and he made a contract with the composer according to which he was to write the music

on his (Ricordi's) account. A year later the opera was finished, but Ricordi refused to publish it.

After a delay of over three years, Leoncavallo wrote the libretto and music of "Pagliacci," and offered the opera to Sonzogno, who, as we have seen, had been the direct means of giving "Cavalleria Rusticana" to the world. The work was produced for the first time at Milan in May 1892. At that time somebody asked the composer whether the libretto was based on a real event. He replied that the idea was suggested by a trial that took place at Cosenza before his father, judge of the court there, in which a strolling player, jealous of his wife, was charged with murdering her after a stage performance. The prisoner was a figure of tragic power as he stood before the judge, unblenching, as if petrified with grief. "Even now," continued the composer, "I can hear his rough voice echoing through the court as he cried, 'Non mi pento del delitto.

Tutt altro! Se dovessi ricominciare, ricomincerei.'” While Ricordi was still delaying about the “Medici,” the success of Mascagni with “Cavalleria” gave Leoncavallo the idea of writing a short dramatic work, and at once the awful figure of the mountebank murderer rose up in his mind. He worked with feverish haste, and completed text and music in four months.

Such is the history of “I Pagliacci.” There is not much to say further about the composer himself. He lives quietly at Milan in a one-storey, vine-clad dwelling, in a walled-in garden. His rooms are decorated with Japanese fans, weapons, lanterns, slit-eyed deities, *et hoc genus omne*. Leoncavallo says that when a musical inspiration comes to him he never writes it down at once. He keeps it in his memory, which is remarkably good. “When I need the idea, I can find it immediately. I have a horror of re-writing or deleting: the parts of my composition are carried in my head till I can write them

down, even to the last note. Then I do not alter a jot."

It is proverbially dangerous to prophesy—unless you know. Twelve or fifteen years ago, when Dr. Hugo Riemann published his well-known "Dictionary of Music," he wrote, under the name of Ruggiero Leoncavallo: "The public will soon forget him; and the art criticism with respect to Leoncavallo and also Mascagni pass to the order of the day." That "soon" has not yet arrived!

THE END

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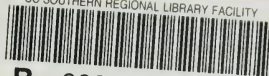
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